

# *The* Catch

WINTER 2025

*Cordova's Own Literary & Arts Journal*



*Edge of Sheridan River // Oil painting by David Rosenthal*



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All donations go to *Friends of the Library*.

Happy New Year to All,

Hope everyone is finding ways to enjoy their time during this confusion of winter weather . . . Perfect conditions for curling up with your local literary & arts journal. Our next issue marks 4 years in print, which is a milestone worthy of celebration.

As ever, **THANK YOU** to all of our contributing artists & writers, and to a community that supports the arts!

See you in the Spring . . .

**With Love & Gratitude,**

Jillian Gold  
Editor



## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

**ALL AGES. ALL MEDIUMS. NO ENTRY LIMIT.**

Feature your art & writing in the **Spring 2025** issue (*No. 16*).



**Due by March 15th.**

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# Seasonal Catch

## ARTWORKS

Sergei Bogatchev // Pages 6, 28  
Rob Brown // Page 6  
Eowyn Gordon // Page 14  
Greg Mans // Page 19  
PPayne // Pages 15, 21, 27  
David Rosenthal // **FRONT COVER**, page 9  
Steve Schoonmaker // Page 20  
Mazie VanDenBroek // Pages 5, 26

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Sergei Bogatchev // Page 7  
Chris Byrnes // Page 33  
Jack Donachy // Page 29  
Jude Nel Horney // Page 22  
Darcy Saiget // Pages 4, 8  
David Saiget // Pages 11, 12, 16, 18  
Steve Schoonmaker // Page 31  
Brian Varner // Pages 17, 24, **BACK COVER**  
Tina Yo-Ma // Page 10

*Title Lettering by Jillian Gold*

## WRITTEN WORKS

Christina Anderson // Pages 24-26  
Laura Bowman // Page 27  
Rob Brown // Page 6  
Monica Casner // Pages 12-14  
Colin Chappell // Page 16  
Jack Donachy // Pages 29-33  
Jeanie Gold // Page 19  
Jillian Gold // Pages 7, 11, 28  
Jude Nel Horney // Page 15  
Amy O'Neill Houck // Page 4  
Greg Mans // Page 5  
Reth // Page 18  
Carolyn Roesbery // Page 21  
Steve Schoonmaker // Pages 8-9, 17, 20  
Nathan Wesely // Pages 22-23  
Nicolas Wesely // Pages 22-23  
Tina Yo-Ma // Page 10



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There is occasional use of forceful language in this publication. ***Please exercise reader discretion.***

# Skating Sheridan

By Amy O'Neill Houck

Skates move over glacial ice that captures a reflection of mountains and sky so clear and bright; it's startling. To get to this otherworldly rink, we drove on the only road out of town to the beginning of the glacier trail. We hiked nearly a mile: clambering over parts of the glacier, staring into glacial pools, walking along the ridge until we find the right spot.

It was about two in the afternoon, early December. By the time we reached the frozen pool, the winter sun was low in the clear sky, not giving us any heat. We quickly changed the kids into their skates and donned our own.



*Sheridan* // Photo by Darcy Saiget

My first steps are tentative. In that moment between sitting and standing I'm unstable, but once up I have the balance to edge forward. I imagine a fawn trying to stand just after being born. My son, on skates for his second or third time, takes after that deer more fully. He has the capacity to fall and get up without rancor, unfazed as he stumbles on his new bladed feet. As a child I skated with friends in a hockey arena; our shouts echoed as we grabbed the cold plastic sides of the rink. I remember creeping in skates, across the rubber tiles that lined the hall between the rink and the benches. My daughter notices that I'm pushing with only one foot, my right. I can't answer why. Is it some long ago learned skating habit my mind has forgotten but my feet can't abandon? As a child, I was tiny, skinny, wobbly-kneed, and weak-ankled like that newborn deer. I did not thrive at physical activity. I tried to be a ballerina and was guided towards activities requiring less grace.

Skating outdoors, I am closer to parts of my world I only see from a distance in warmer months. I can glide places usually unreachable. We walk right up to ice caves or the toe of the glacier. Here mere humans can walk on water. Here on the ice the grace surrounds. The winter afternoon light, the mountains, the sky, the quiet cracking of the glacier seem to erase my normal clumsiness. The ice feels so smooth; it's almost like floating. You could go on and on. I want to. There are miles of ice just around the corner. I want to explore the next iceberg and the next and see where it all goes. But the sun is setting quickly, and the children are growing cold and tired of life on unsteady blades. Instead of wandering far, we find a million new things in this small frozen oasis. We climb inside ice caves, learn to avoid scattered glacial sand, find the glassiest spots. We linger in this one sunny glass pool as we watch the moon rise huge and close over the mountain of blue ice.



# The Wave

By Greg Mans

Words nearly spoken.

A dream almost lived.

One wrong move and a man's body is badly crippled for the rest of his life.

We walk a fine line.

The difference between keeping all your fingers or losing a couple to the circular saw is an instant.

The Buddha, instead of squirming, might have found that space staying on for a few more breaths.

Just like Saint Francis could have gone either way.

Bliss creeps at the edge of restraint and Sophia was partly made without it.

A Woman, under the full moon, chooses to step away from the wall and join a sea of dancing bodies—  
3,000 miles away, a fisherman moves his set to a gutter 40 yards down the beach—  
and the rest is history.

We are not promised greatness or tomorrow.

Our right place might be earned, just as much thanks to the perhaps random of life's grace and luck.

Standing waist-deep in warm Pacific water—the next set rips and draws, rushes past our trying legs,  
standing strong.

We catch the wave, pushing off sandy bottom when it's time and just before it's too late and with a  
can't-be-helped smile on our face—that beautiful, perfect water might sling our body just right—  
graceful, smooth, to the beach.



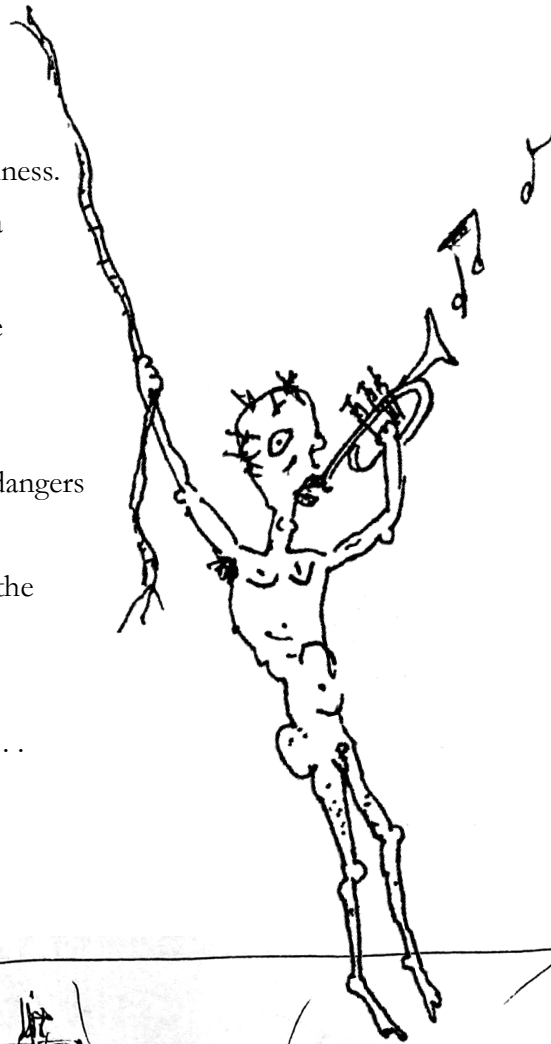
*Sheridan Pond on the Edge of Sheridan Glacier // Acrylic painting by Mazie VanDenBroek*



# CHARGED

By Rob Brown

Dangling by a thread  
Over a thing called Madness.  
Dancing ever closer to a  
Cliff called Love . . .  
Clawing up the backside  
Of the bell curve of  
Time . . .  
Peering over the pit of dangers  
Abyss . . .  
Lost my grips and bear the  
Scars . . .  
Crawl back up  
The Desire is the edge . . .





## Passage

By Jillian Gold

I've never been one to launch my body from a bridge  
Nervous enough to watch from below  
Considering all the ways we're not near help  
Skulls fracture, and worse, on rock or bottom

Boat and water, both thrilling enough for me  
Actually already beyond my comforts,  
I celebrate a foot on land, every time  
Give me a trampoline with safety netting

As kids turning teen, such strange feats proved coolness  
I stood on the outside while you kissed in closets  
A stopwatch queued up, intimate with the ascension of numbers  
And knowing that each of our seven minutes feel very different

Life is an epic of things I don't understand  
Why people elect to free climb when ropes exist  
Seeking always to compound what risks there already are  
Pushing for more than what edge is constant



*Moscow Winter* // Photo by Sergei Bogatchev

## Cliffs

By Steve Schoonmaker—*F/V Saulteur*



*Nepal // Photo by Darcy Saiget*

If fearful the edge  
of the light of our fires  
We stay back from  
the cliffs  
of our taunting desires

The edge that is known  
From proclaimed safety zones  
Where it's safer to be  
if we leave it alone  
Though our minds want  
to see where the edges  
might be  
Drawn like a bug  
to the light of our fires  
to the edge of those cliffs  
of our taunting desires

When considering reason  
It only makes sense  
to guard rail those edges  
With fearful pretense  
Not much like a waterfall  
Surprised by a cliff  
But more like a flow  
getting dammed  
by what if

Where the mind creates  
edges  
imagining fear  
While taunting desires  
keep on drawing us near

*(continues on next page)*



If no edges were drawn  
No cliffs to look down  
to flow like a waterfall  
Not fearing we'll drown  
Not fearing what's next  
guard railed all around  
No edge would exist  
for a fear to be found

Drawn like a bug  
to the light of our fires  
to edge over the cliffs  
of our taunting desires  
Burning mental obstructions  
no longer required  
to use as our fuel  
for lighting new fires

Surprised as a Waterfall  
free falling clear  
feeling the edges  
but not feeling fear  
Flow goes for this reason  
From there we get here  
Over cliff edges crumbling  
that are drawing us near

When a cliff's a surprise  
and its message is clear  
in the roar of our  
waterfalls  
our absence of fear.



*Edge of the Flats* // Oil painting by David Rosenthal

## Anna—Draft 2

By Tina Yo-Ma

Meditating by a warm fire,  
Tears roll down my toasty cheeks.

Eyes close,  
Body relaxes  
Seeking emptiness,  
Silence.

Suddenly saw Anna,  
Wearing a long dark skirt,  
Beige blouse.

Beckoning her over  
Into the balm of my arms she floats.  
Stroking her long silky brown hair,  
Holding her gently,

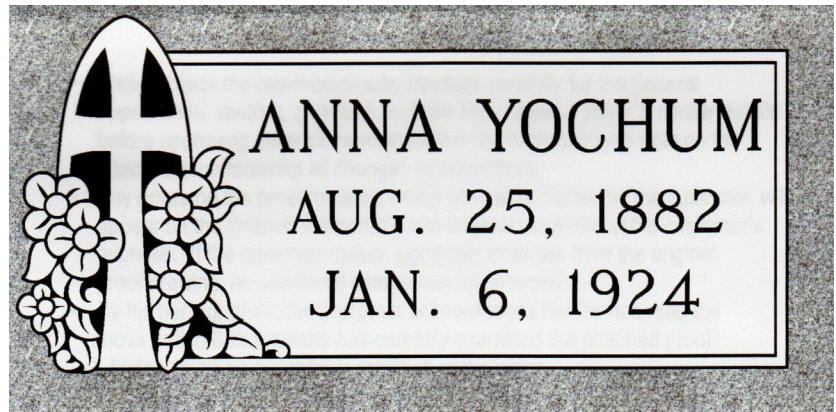
Nineteen-Twenty censuses found:  
“Annie Yochum,  
Inmate,  
Female,  
White,  
38 year’s old,  
Servant.”  
St. Louis Lunatic Asylum.  
Dreadful name,  
Insensitive.

My heart drops to my stomach,  
Enveloping her body tighter this time.

Brother, Emil, brought  
Fresh fruits and vegetables  
From his aromatic, soil rich gardens,  
For the hospital’s kitchen.

Do you recall, Anna?  
Why? Because he loves you.

Stillborn infant, after stillborn infant,  
After.....  
Drove you over the edge, sweet Anna.



No judgment, just love and  
Acceptance here.

She lays limp,  
Content,  
Peaceful,  
Mute in the rapture  
Of my long slender arms.

Spoke of her granite,  
Gray gravestone.  
New,  
A l o n g.....  
97 year wait.  
All yours, Anna,  
Why? Because you’re valuable.

Green grassy unmarked burial plot,  
Soon will display a crown at your head,  
Where your bones now lay.  
Why? Because you matter, Anna.  
You always have.

Searching for your husband.....  
Nowhere found.  
Who was he?  
Kind? Indifferent? Empty?

Luckily found Anna,  
Cherish you,  
Value you, ancient ancestor.

No longer forgotten,  
Anna,  
Sweet, Sorrowful,  
Anna.



# The White Lodge

By Jillian Gold

With ease I can access  
Memory of a place  
Not here or anywhere  
But firmly in between

Not an isolated  
Singular manifest

A place outside of the Grid  
But integral to what  
Structure or fabric holds  
The All of It as one

It's where the curtain tears  
Just wide enough to glimpse  
What we forget we've seen  
Tight weave of life and death  
Trace threads of sanity  
Where it all  
Just barely

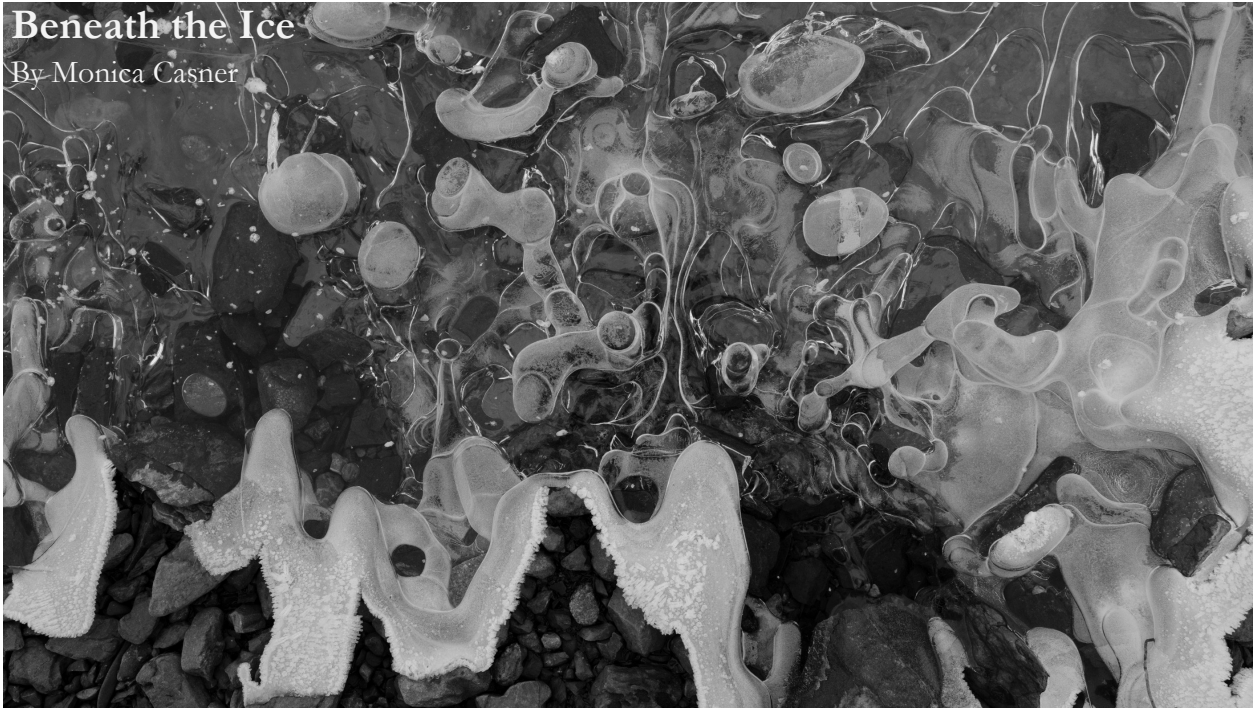
Touches.



Photograph by David Saiget

## Beneath the Ice

By Monica Casner



Photograph by David Saiget

### **PART I: LUNA**

The moon reflected on the frozen lake as Luna quietly crept to the fishing hole her dad drilled that afternoon. He had been hoping to catch a few grayling for dinner, but came home concerned about the lack of fish. She was bundled tight in her purple down jacket with pajamas underneath. It was too cold for wind, and the snow muffled all sounds except for the squeak of her boots on the ice. It was unusual for her dad to come home empty handed this time of year. She peered through the thin skein of ice formed over the hole to try to see fish.

A dark shape darted away from the hole. Luna clapped her hand over her mouth, hiding a giggle. The fish must have been hiding from her dad! She knew they were down there. Luna heard the sound of her name dance through the night air, far away and worried. She pulled back from the jagged hole, and quickly began her traverse across the lake. She hoped her mother wasn't angry with her for going out on the ice at night. She knew better than to go on the ice without an adult, but she wanted to make sure the fish were still there. She thought back to when she was six, scared of the ice at night.

A few winters ago on a family hunting trip, her

father told her a story about what happens to kids who go out on the ice at night. He said there were ancient things on the bottom of the lake—things we don't quite understand. He regaled her with tales of ancient beings who could trick children into joining them in their icy tombs. He claimed to have seen such a creature once, a wretched thing, disguising itself as something else. He'd laughed when he saw her wide, gullible eyes. He'd sipped his beer saying it was just a story, and sent her off to bed. She'd hardly slept a wink that night.

Shaking off the scary memory, she turned her focus to the trail ahead. She picked her way through the trees, hurrying home and hoping her mom wouldn't be angry with her. When Luna burst into the clearing where her family's cabin stood, she was surprised to find the house dark. She knew she'd heard her mother's voice call her. It didn't make sense she wasn't standing on the front porch with her arms crossed over her chest, face pinched with worry. The woods were silent and the only movement came from wisps of smoke drifting from their chimney.

Luna furtively entered the cabin, careful not to make a sound. She hung her coat on its peg and jumped into bed, waiting to get caught by her mom at any moment. She fell asleep wondering if she'd really heard her name called at all.

*(continues on next page)*



## **PART II: CHUCK**

Chuck exhaled great plumes of white as he sank his line into the lake. He had been out all morning setting lines and checking nets. The only food left in their freezer was some old chum salmon he had planned to feed the dogs, and a few pounds of freezer burned caribou meat. He regretted his choices fishing this summer. The Yukon fishery had crashed, and he lamented not joining his brothers in Bristol Bay. They were harvesting record numbers out there. On top of that, unfavorable ice conditions had led to his inability to get more caribou this fall. The rivers and lakes had only a scant few inches of ice, not nearly enough to support his snow machine. There were no other safe paths if you couldn't take the rivers. Seasons just weren't what they used to be. He sighed.

Chuck had been having a hard time since he lost his wife the year before. He had known Rita since they were in high school. They'd married young, embracing the family life together. They'd built a modest cabin nestled in black spruce on the edge of a lake. They had their first and only child quickly. She'd always wanted more kids, but luck hadn't lent a hand with that. Rita had filled the house with warmth, making their rough hewn cabin a home. He still couldn't shake the empty feeling he'd had since he awoke the next morning. He wondered if he ever would.

He'd never understood why she'd gone out into the storm that night. They'd been snuggled under their blankets, stove crackling when he'd drifted off. He awoke in the night to an empty spot next to him on the mattress. He'd rolled over and gone right back to sleep. Why hadn't he sensed something was wrong? Why didn't he get up and look for her then? He rubbed his calloused hands over tired eyes, feeling full of sorrow and regret. He knew he'd better make his way back to the cabin, it was lunch time for Luna.

## **PART III: THE EDGE**

Luna woke with a start, heart thumping in her chest. She rubbed sleep from her eyes and tugged her blanket up to her chin. She shivered, realizing the cold was probably what had dragged her from her dreams. Sitting up she prepared to make her dash to the living room to stoke the fire. The embers glowed in the belly of the old stove. Luna fed kindling piece by piece until the flame was big enough to add logs. She rocked on her heels, eyeing the stove. Her dad taught her to always watch for a few minutes to make sure the fire got going.

As she waited for their cabin to begin warming, she heard a noise from outside. She peered out of the window that overlooked the lake. The moon glittered on the dark ice. The breeze swirled through the long dormant willows. She glanced at the outside thermometer. Single digits! Not too bad. Tomorrow would be a good day to go set snares.

Luna looked around the trees surrounding the cabin, wondering where that noise could have come from. She saw her father emerge from the shed with his fishing gear. He'd had no more luck today. She watched him slowly cross the ice towards his favorite fishing hole. She decided she'd stoke the fire a little more, then get dressed and go keep him company outside. Her dad was facing away from her, gazing up at the sky as Luna approached.

"Okay if I join you?" she asked timidly, approaching her father's back.

"I'd like nothing more. Come closer Luna. See how the fish bathe in her light." Her father said.

Luna shuffled closer, being careful not to slip.

"Why are you talking funny?"

Her father didn't respond, continuing to stand silently.

*(continues on next page)*

“Dad?” Luna called, feeling nervous. “Are you okay?”

“Come closer, Luna. Come see what lies beneath the ice.”

As Luna stood next to her father, she realized he was not wearing shoes or gloves. His toes and fingers were blackened in places from the cold. Staring up at his face she only saw black holes where his kind eyes once were.

“Dad! You’re hurt, we need to get you inside.” She pulled gently on his wrist, careful not to touch his mangled fingers.

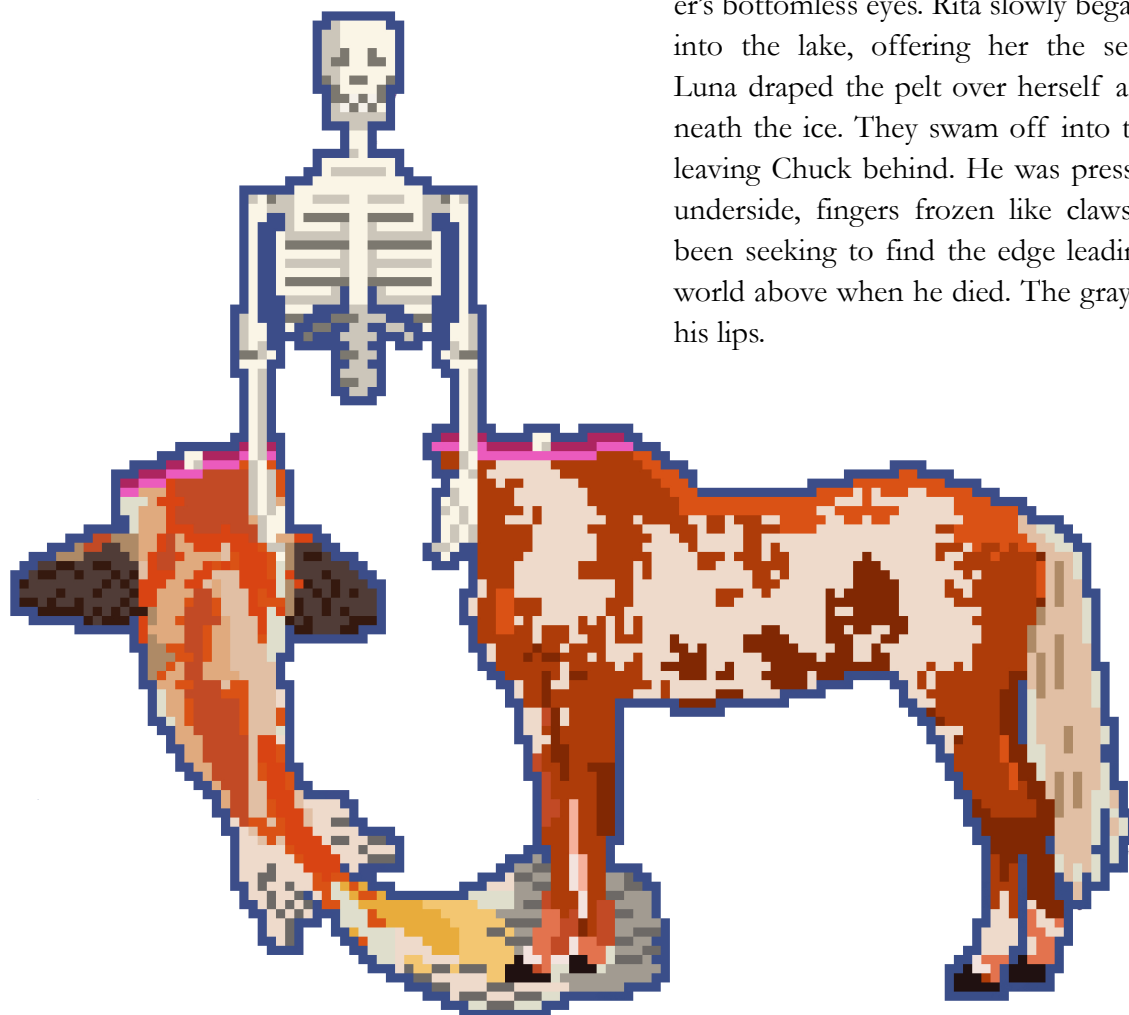
“Come closer, you must look from the edge.” He gripped her hand and pulled her to the edge of the hole in the ice. Dark water was visible, but she could not see to the bottom.

“LOOK LUNA! Gaze upon her! Gaze upon all that is good!”

A dark shape moved in the depths. The silvery flash of a tail, spotted like a seal’s hide. Long, dark hair rippled in the deep. She saw a familiar face through the murky water, her mother’s deep, black eyes. Her mother opened her mouth and began to sing, slow and melancholic. She held up the pelt of a seal, beckoning Luna to the water.

As Rita sang, her father, dazed and injured, forced himself through the ice, widening the hole with his wild movement. Luna froze, knowing if she tried to pull him out, he was likely to drag her in with his thrashing. He was desperate to be in the water with his love.

Her mother slipped through his grasp and pulled herself onto the ice, sliding towards Luna inch by inch. Luna smelled decay and rotting fish. Rita smiled at her, exposing a mouth full of needle-like teeth. She held out her cold hand. Luna grasped it, unable to resist. She was hypnotized by her mother’s bottomless eyes. Rita slowly began to lead Luna into the lake, offering her the second sealskin. Luna draped the pelt over herself and slipped beneath the ice. They swam off into the dark water, leaving Chuck behind. He was pressed against the underside, fingers frozen like claws as if he had been seeking to find the edge leading back to the world above when he died. The grayling nibbled at his lips.



*Thetis the Amphibious* // Pixel art by Eowyn Gordon



## Mindful of the Edge

By Jude Nel Horney

curiosity  
killed the cat  
and THAT . . .  
makes me curious

pushing me,  
pulling me—  
or are we dancing closer  
for a peek?

some  
need to see it  
and others  
have to poke it with a stick



*Condor* // Acrylic painting by PPayne

## This Knife

By Colin Chappell

Most knives are razor sharp to skin your kill  
but I happen to skin,

gut

and cut

my kill's throat with this  
one knife.

This knife  
has about a 4-inch blade and a 5-inch handle for good grip.  
This knife  
is a gutting knife that cuts me more than it cuts the animal.  
This knife  
has gutted moose and deer many times.  
This knife  
has even soaked in blood and been lost in moose while I'm gutting  
but I just learned to never let go.  
It only takes one little slip and you have a really nice cut.  
And ohhh boy! Does it hurt.  
I was given this knife when I was a young boy by my dad's good friend.  
I didn't start to actually use the knife till I was about eight.  
But now that I'm older I use the same knife every hunt  
knowing it's definitely gonna dig its  
edges into my hands.



Photograph by David Saiget



## An Edge

By Steve Schoonmaker—*F/V Saulteur*

No knife is enough  
Without an edge  
No mind is enough  
If left dull  
There to be used  
And sharpened again  
Whether an edge  
in a sheath  
Or a Skull

An edge can't be honed  
Anywhere else  
Only an edge to a stone  
Or a mind to a task  
Refined to the max  
It's that edge that cuts  
Flesh from the bone

A finely honed skill  
Takes an edge to a stone  
Dulled without discipline  
Nothing is grown  
Not like that edge  
That you are in the Zone  
And an edge  
that's not used  
has a sheath  
for a home

Our minds cut ourselves  
With our sharp intellect  
Undirected, an edge  
Can have dulling effects  
But when an edge recognized  
Is an edge you respect  
You can cut to the scenes  
That you really direct

Honed to its sharpened  
Is an edge at its best  
A knife handles nothing  
If not gripped by the flesh  
If not nurtured and cared for  
And put to a stone  
If not used and reused  
And continually honed

No knife is enough  
Without an edge  
No mind is enough  
If left dull  
There to be used  
And sharpened again  
Whether an edge  
in a sheath  
Or a Skull



Photograph by Brian Varner

## Broken Window, What a Paine

Haiku by Reth

jagged, my pieces  
lay flat in front of me now  
oh what a sore sight



Photograph by David Saiget



# Jerusalem

By Jeanie Gold

One of the oldest cities in the world,  
its history spanning more than 5,000 years.

Situated between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea,  
the spiritual capital of both Israel and Palestine.

A place considered holy to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,  
its translation from Hebrew means “city of peace”.

Though not yet achieved in the outer world,  
it remains an inspirational aspiration.

Perhaps, one day, Israel and Palestine will coexist in harmony  
and, maybe then, humanity will finally live in peace.

And then, I remember . . .  
peace without, begins from peace within.

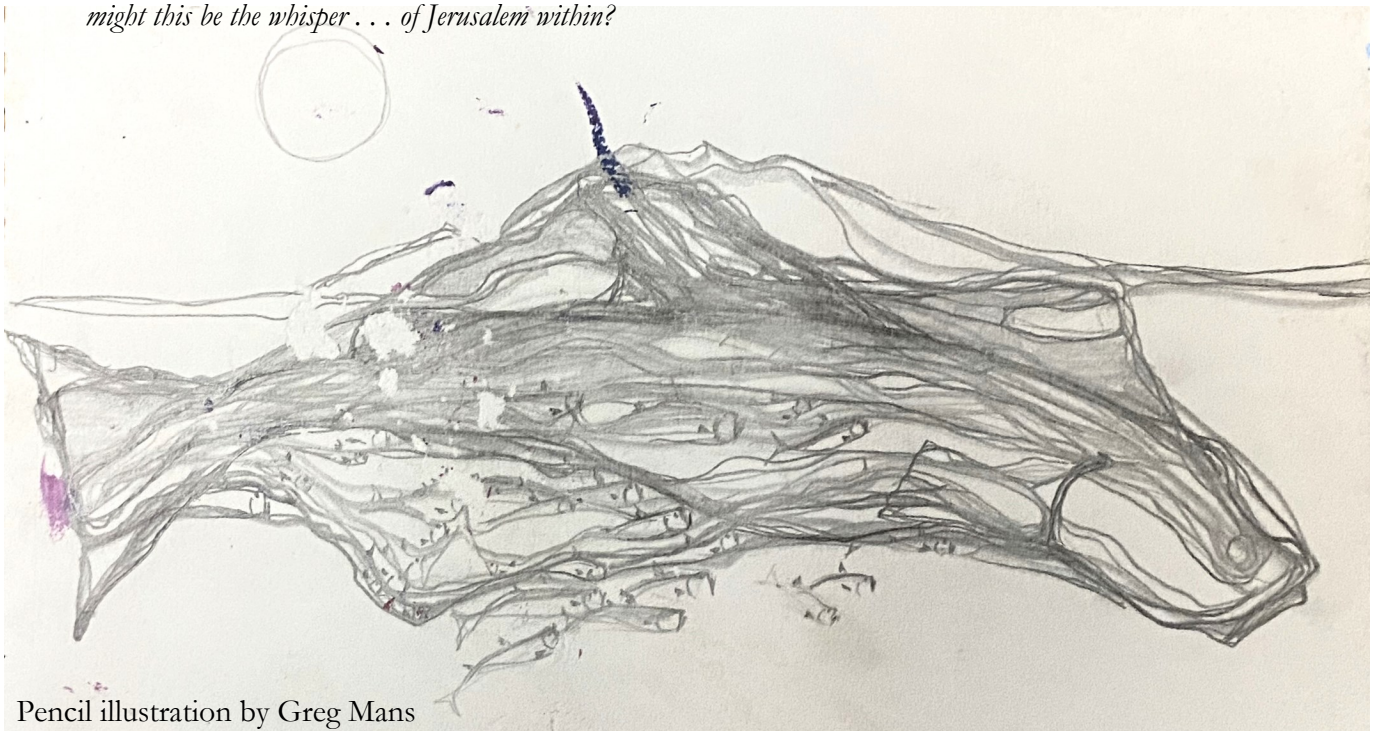
So, I close my eyes and sit quietly in stillness,  
focused on the in-and-outflow of my breath.

And gradually, breathing recedes from my awareness  
and my attention shifts to something deeper

far beyond bodily sensation, beyond the edges  
of mind, thought, emotion, feeling

and, for a brief moment,  
I am enveloped in a profound experience of peace.

And it leaves me wondering,  
*might this be the whisper . . . of Jerusalem within?*



Pencil illustration by Greg Mans

# Self Universal

By Steve Schoonmaker—*F/V Saulteur*



*Roots View* // Watercolor mixed media  
by Steve Schoonmaker

Edges blur  
at the boundaries  
of perception  
at the periphery  
of our five-sensing instruments  
Limiting self  
Universal

Only what's perceived  
is known  
the rest imagination  
struggling boundaries  
blurring the edges  
of self  
Universal

Earth breathes  
Sighing  
through the trees  
rooted firmly  
Finding itself  
Universal

Atmosphere's  
rain wets  
Earth's soil  
finding its way  
to the Sea's  
Blurry edges  
fluidly inclusive

Finding itself  
Universal

Natural Life derived  
from Planet soil  
and atmosphere  
form our physicality  
Blurring edges  
dispelling individuality  
with the myths  
of perception  
of the self as other  
the World another  
Blurring the Self  
Universal

Worlds inside Worlds  
Blurring edges  
Micro organisms  
form in our bodies  
as ecosystems  
blurring the edges  
of Earth's ecosystems  
blurring the edges  
of solar systems  
blurring the edges  
of infinite  
Galaxies  
finding themselves  
Universal



# The Way Leaves Fall Inside a Woman's Body

By Carolyn Roesbery

The way leaves fall is like you and I, two random energies spun across the sky. If I lived in New York City it would be on the edge in the big giant graveyard or in the basement of Juilliard or in your heart if that's where you live, New York City.

If my lemon tongue could touch your almond roca tongue I could tell you which city you hold court in, which city blew blue smoke rings around you, which city served you so well.

Your thoughts

like a kitten stepping on my face, breathing through its fur whiskers tickle he he hee—made you laugh!

What if you lived in Wyoming?

You would know the sound of pheasant wing flutter.

Would you find a secret waterfall?

I already took a walk through Cheyenne where the one main street through town is three times wider than any other street in any other town.

So wide, wide, wide. That . . . just because in Cheyenne meat was moved on the hoof and the streets were wide, wide enough to do that.

All highways are trail of tears to termination for murdered women; particularly indigenous women, murdered in sheds, basements, underneath the winter stars in pickup trucks behind gas stations.

If you live in Wyoming you would know the legend of Matthew Shepard, TRUTH! Not a legend!

A gay man slaughtered and hung on a barbed wire fence; in the wind in the snow in the rain.

You are a gay man. I am a gay man, I am a gay man inside a woman's body. Be sure to celebrate.

Time has given birth to awareness. Celebrate



Mixed media illustration by PPayne



## What Weight We Bear in Wanting

A Sestina by Nathan and Nicolas Wesely



Photo by Jude Nel Horney

*Tanda Malaika—In Slow Pursuit of the Map's Edge*

I could see your blood on the windlass  
simply by how you spoke the memory, and mudlark  
that I am, sifted through some mucky understanding, juggling  
time, water, and voice like broken pieces of topography,  
urging movement through shadows & silence singing—  
knowing, stood there on the bow, how brightly violent these vortices.

*(continues on next page)*

I plunge mind first into these vortices  
and without the use of a windlass  
lines ring back singing  
like the slapping bellows of a mudlark  
crowned in baleful topography,  
unsteady amongst dancing, thoughtless jugglers.

Jugglers  
mock vortices  
by way of airy topographies—  
no windlass  
to wind down or anchor the mudlark—  
everyone eyeing patterns of silt and air as if they might sing.

And together with singing,  
wild fire passed through the hands of jugglers  
into the dark pockets of a mudlark.  
Tangling lines birth vortices  
endlessly spinning clockwise round the windlass  
tracing patchy topography.

The soul must needs be topographic—  
something visualized by gradient singing—  
unwed to the windlass—  
a naked juggling  
of blood soaked vortices—  
all of us a river, an ebbled sea, beckoning search to like-minded mudlarks.

Dawn discarded warmth on the banks near the sleeping mudlark,  
with excesses seeping through local topography  
gathering empty space traced in vortices.  
I wasn't the only one who woke up singing,  
dancing with these thoughts like half-mad jugglers  
when the necessity arose to secure ourselves with a windlass.

Stumbling along toward sunken vortices a faint singing  
was heard amongst the mudlarks nestled deep in their blind topographies.  
All around them, the tongues of the jugglers, draped upon the windlass.

*A sestina is a lyrical fixed form consisting of six 6-line usually unrhymed stanzas in which the end words of the first stanza recur as end words of the following five stanzas in a successively rotating order and as the middle and end words of the three verses of the concluding tercet*

“sestina.” Merriam-Webster.com 2024. <https://www.merriam-webster.com> (26 December 2024).

# Living on the Edge

By Christina L. Anderson

BEAN COVE was calling me—some unknown voice, swirling through the westerlies, tucking in and out of an ocean bay, catching my attention—all the while, sitting hundreds of miles away in Seattle. It was the same voice that must have passed right through every inhabitant of that small town. Residents heard the calling at some point in life, silencing their true reasons for living there—personal trauma, loss of a loved one, escapement from whatever definition deems “normal society,” or possibly they were just plain stuck. It was a place so far off the grid that no one had a logical reason to visit. Local residents—I’m sure had their reasons. However, if I was a tourist in town and listened to a handful of them, would the little lightbulb in my brain turn toward understanding? Were reasons simply nothing more than justifications? Would meeting the locals be full of chatty conversation and body movements—hands flinging to the left, then to the right, heads waged up and down, as to say, yes, yes, that’s it, you *do* understand now. Want to be friends in Bean Cove over tea or sip wine around 3ish today?

**TEXT—Monday, February 18th**

ME: *Just left my team meeting - they said to go home, work virtual*

BRIAN: *What you thinking*

ME: *My 793 sq ft high rise condo does not feel like home*

BRIAN: *Move to Bean Cove*

ME: *Why*

BRIAN: *Because you can*



Photograph by Brian Varner

People want to tell you about how powerful their actions were when they just packed up a few personal articles, declared to family & friends that everyone has the right to up and leave their current circumstances. Adventure Bay is never very far away, in most minds. After all, when it calls strongly enough and for the final time, we immediately think our decision to head west will prove righteous in the sight of family, friends and even our God. Without these justifications, how could Bean Cove’s residents explain their decision to seek out daily adventure—

because honestly, that was really what the town was all about. Daily adventure. The weather wasn’t anyone’s have all, give all paradise. Was Bean Cove merely a place to grasp the common concept that most humans look for during their daily grind—PLAY while you WORK!

PING . . . Had to be cousin Brian with a life-changing text.

**TEXT—Tuesday, Feb. 19th**

BRIAN: *There is a 50 ft. Delta Hull for sale in the harbor*

ME: *So I go from 793 sq ft rental - down to 480 sq ft ownership*

BRIAN: *How can you work from a rental, if your personal space doesn’t feel like home*

ME: *I can own this rental for 500K, well, in about 20 years....*

BRIAN: *Wire me 25K and the boat is yours*

ME: *Let me sleep on it*

BRIAN: *Sweet dreams R.J.*

*(continues on next page)*



Sometimes the shortest conversations between two people are the most powerful. I never reply more than once a week because he always challenges me—like the brother I never had. Being an only child, no societal ties, lent to the possibility of embracing the idea of moving out of my high-rise condo unit, back down to sea level. Somehow, it perked my interest. Being born Regina Jade—R. J. for short—groomed me to find endless opportunities in the field of technology. Not because I'm so smart as to have developed an app which raked in millions. No—it was just easy for me to understand the tech game and get the college degree most companies were looking for. Math and science came easy. No math anxiety issues for this girl, who grew up drawing positive geometrical lines in life. Plus, putting “R.J.” on my resume, instead of Regina, pretty much got the interview which in turn got me the money. Growing up, Brian said if you don't want life to sting too hard, we all have to jump out of our virtual description of ourselves, leave the cartoon character behind and present ourselves strongly in person. He was smart, mechanically so. Every ship captain wanted a Brian onboard. He wasn't the cheerleader type, like myself. No resume building like within the corporate world. It was as if seagulls would fly from continent to continent and shout out Brian's name to harbor inhabitants. His name was heard in Rotterdam, Singapore, Hamburg. His favorite port was Marseille, the second-largest Mediterranean port, and the fourth-largest European port. He couldn't speak any country languages, yet he loved the lifestyle of people. When Bean Cove whispered his name, he must have heard the echo millions of ocean waves away—OR—maybe those sea birds carried the message to him personally. Either way, Brian found Bean Cove, bought land, ordered a Lindal Cedar home to have built. Leaving the workers to hone in on their craft, I had once asked if he

needed me to fly in over a long weekend to check on the progress. “Certainly” was a one-word response he loved to use with people, yet I knew his concern was not for the cabin, but for me needing a break from the city.

I never went.

**TEXT—**Wednesday, Feb. 20th

ME: *My morning inspirational read referenced Florence Nightingale*

BRIAN: *She learned French, German, Italian and Greek growing up, unlike myself*

ME: *Florence also claimed to have had “calls from God”*

BRIAN: *You rang . . .*

ME: *What's your bank routing number – 25K coming your way.*

Chunk of money gone, in less than 10 seconds, over a wire. Took me longer to save it than spend. Isn't that how life directs us? Within our own problematic brains, we thirst first for food, shelter, clothing. What a great man Maslow was to enlighten us with his human theory toward existence. As humans, we buy, consume, save money until there is no longer a value. When used as a noun, *value* means, “the numerical amount denoted by an algebraic term; a magnitude, quantity, or number.” Most of us see the meaning of *value* as “to estimate the monetary worth of something.” Today's touchy-feely societies really consider the word to mean, “(someone or something) to be important or beneficial; have a high opinion of”—*value* one another. Since I consider myself life's biggest cheerleader, and value all of us, I deemed it time to value my sanity and to leave city life as I've known it. Dad had always bragged that he could live on 35K annually in retirement. He had one hundred times that amount invested in stocks and property, but with his long-term discipline to save, came bragging rights on how to not spend money.

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*LOL—Dad—guess I was happy to watch you work hard, endure the corporate stress, build a little empire, and live inside your golden castle. But saving the money, only to die early without truly enjoying retirement will not be my journey. I'm taking Maslow's advice instead of dad's because there is still 40K available in my savings account. Good thing, because I have a sneaky feeling the 50-footer is going to swallow that up in a remodel project.*

**TEXT—**Thursday, Feb. 21st

*ME: Did my 25K get wired to Siberia – where are you*

*BRIAN: No such luck – I have your title, well, US Coastguard certificate of documentation*

*ME: Most 50 footers online are selling for \$275 - \$500K – does mine float*

*BRIAN: Tell me how you really feel about your new home*

*ME: I put in for 10 day vacation to come see her – it is a her – right*

*BRIAN: Yes, she's in the harbor – ready for inspection Captain*

I have never been the captain of any team or group event I've been associated with. I'm more like a cheerleader on the sidelines chanting "R.J., R.J., I'm your gal, let's make R.J. every one's pal." There, I've divulged my character. Taking direction from leaders or a captain helps me remain within my comfort zone. You know, those zones we stay in because embracing the pillow we rest our heads on each evening, means warmth & safety guided through others, instead of taking direction from ourselves. Even the homeless in the big city prefer their tent pillows to that of other warm offerings from family, friends, or the community. O.K., R.J.—Leaving the big city to remodel a live aboard yacht is a pretty *edgy move!* Fortunately, I read that our brains take only 34 days to settle into a new environment, once we move in. A cat takes only one and a half weeks to adjust to their new home. Hopefully I land somewhere in the middle.

Bean Cove—here I come.



*Skaters Cabin on the Edge of Eyak Lake // Acrylic painting by Mazie VanDenBroek*



## Sewing Memories

By Laura Bowman

My mom's vintage sewing machine brings a flood of memories. I run my fingers over its strong edges. It's a cute little travel-model Elna, completely metal, very heavy, made in the day when things were built to last. On it I sewed my first white-and-red-striped shorts. There were countless projects after that . . . pillows, skirts, the famous dress where we miscut the bodice and didn't have enough extra fabric to cut a new piece. We resorted to patchworking a new bodice and I heard the hum of the machine as my mother worked late into the night to finish in time for the Christmas Banquet.

The top flap of the machine hides a compartment with all sorts of fascinating tools. As a kid, lifting the flap was opening the door to a secret world. I would turn the various shapes of presser feet in my hands and run my fingers over the edges of the extra bobbins. The most used tool, perhaps, was the sharp little seam ripper. How many seams has it ripped out? Remember the dress where I ripped and resealed the side seam several times, never getting it right? Exasperated, I finally realized I'd been altering the wrong side of the dress. So many years later, that seam ripper with its white, rounded handle is still there, yellowed with age.

Age is the destroyer of so many things. How long will it be before age destroys this machine? It's still going strong. I expect its life to continue and sew on beyond my mother's years. How many more projects will it produce, and under whose

hands? Hopefully the machine outlives me, because I dread the day when I am told that replacement parts or servicing are no longer available. I don't think I'll ever be ready for this machine's death, and I begin to wonder, like so many mortals have, how I might prolong life. Perhaps I can buy an identical Elna so I can swap out parts?

As I close up the flaps of the machine and stow my trusty and reliable old friend on its shelf, I realize how grateful I am for it. I'm sure I don't thank it enough. This reminds me of a few of my trusty and reliable old human friends. It's a good time to thank them, too.



*Self portrait with baby Ghyptodon*

Oil paint on cupboard (c. 1987) by PPayne



## Oshi, In Between

By Jillian Gold

In between is an okay place to be  
Oshi was beaming  
When she considered, 'in between'  
To her, in between isn't uncertainty  
To her, in between is here to remind us  
That we're doing okay



Watercolors by Sergei Bogatchev

## Two Friends

By Jack Donachy

### Prologue

*To this day mind holds no image more satisfying than that of a pair of WestPac sailors, sleep in their eyes, downing warm bottles of Coke on a patio somewhere south of the Tropic of Cancer, Chanticleer announcing the day, pale sun making long shadows on a quiet street, damp air scented with charcoal and hibiscus, a young woman slapping around the place in flip-flops, chairs arranged legs up on tables from when the place was swept out after closing, the sailors in rumpled dress whites or jeans making conversation about things WestPac sailors make conversation about . . .*

*Too much of the same, not enough . . . There had to be more in this great wide world. Eventually I left.*

*The best part about teaching in Tokyo was that the work-day sometimes ended by mid-afternoon and I'd go with a colleague or alone to some up-town bar. It felt good to have money, to wear a jacket, a tie, a crisp shirt, to be one of the first patrons in an air-conditioned place and to order a cold drink while everything was still clean and fresh and quiet. It felt good to slump into a chair and let that first drink hit, to get straight while outside the sun was high in the muggy Tokyo sky. There is little sweeter than the luxury of getting loose early in the day, particularly when the early drinking takes place in a thriving city and every thought is a thought apart from the swelter and struggle outside.*

*I don't know, exactly, if I am an alcoholic. I suspect that as with most things, there is a continuum. You can have a mild cold, or you can have a bad cold, or you can have something in between. Or you can catch pneumonia and die.*

### Intro

It was good to be back in Hiratsuka, my wife's hometown, rising early, tackling up, pedaling my bike to the beach to throw jigs for Olive Flounders. I'd never had a better vacation. Each morning I managed to come home with something—one day a nice flounder, another day a flathead. I hooked and lost a huge Japanese Sea Bass a handful of meters from shore. Something in the one-meter class thumped my jig and rose to shake her massive head in a cresting wave. I could see the black lateral line etched on her golden flank, jaws gaping, crimson gills lit in soft sunlight and for a brief moment I allowed myself to imagine something like fame. But as the fish sank back into the wave the line went slack. Knees rubbery, jaw unhinged, for the next eternity I stood on the beach staring stupidly at the foaming water where the great fish had disappeared.

It was the best fishing of my life. Not because the fish were large. They weren't—though the sea bass would have got me a round or two of drinks that night. The fishing was good because of where I was. Back in Japan fishing my home beach. The fishing was good because every morning I returned with something fresh to serve to the people I loved—my wife, my daughter, my wife's mother, father and brother.

It was good because there is nothing in angling, nothing in this world, like fishing the surf at dawn, bare feet in wet sand, schools of 'chovies breaking, sunlight the color of melon, everything fresh and undisturbed.



Hiratsuka Kaigan (c. 1995) by Jack Donachy

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But there is more to the world than roaming beaches and fishing. I had two friends, friends I had fished with, had served with, had spent nights talking and drinking and smoking with. I was only to be in Japan for a short time.

\* \* \*

### ***Part I: The Tsu Bop***

I should have admitted that I didn't recognize a damn thing when I got off the train, should've hailed a cab, given the driver the address, let him take me to *Kiyasu*, the restaurant Swider and his wife had opened. But I can be cheap, and so I kidded myself that the walk was what I wanted. It was one of those *mushi-atsui* summer days when a shirt collar becomes damp and grimy and the only sane thing to do after a half hour of walking is to pop into a bar, order an icy lager and chug it—or maybe pour it over your head.

After half-an-hour of ever diminishing sidewalk, it was clear that I'd started off in the wrong direction. I turned around, relocated the station, got my bearings and this time found Cass's place.

Cass's wife greeted me with a cheerful smile and an icy mug of Kirin—to this day the single most welcome beer I've ever downed. When I set the mug down, I noticed that behind the bar dead center in a gallery of customer photos was a photo of me hoisting a 10-pound Red Drum, salt marsh in the background.

*Kono ben, tsuri wa do?* I asked Asako in imperfect Japanese. She told me about a tackle shop where I might get information and about a sea wall where regulars gathered when the *Suzuki* were in.

Cass?

In Nagoya, teaching. Due back any time.

Sure enough, Cass popped in right around dinner time. Asako whipped up a superb teriyaki dish and Cass poured us a couple of drafts. We were on.

"Damn, buddy, it's good to see you." He thrust forward his hand for a second time.

I grabbed his hand and slapped him on the shoulder. "Good to see you, man! This is a hell of a set-up you got."

The conversation went back and forth over dinner. Customers drifted in, the place was small,

Asako needed the chairs.

"We'll go back to my place and get cleaned up," Cass said. "I know all the bars around here. Gotta scout 'em out, keep up with the competition. You know. It's a racket."

I was grateful to have a friend who could handle a night of drinking.

I woke the next morning only slightly hungover but in need of coffee and breakfast. I took a shower, put on fresh clothes and waited to hear Asako and Cass stir.

"Know a place where we can get steak and coffee?"

They did. Asako drove. Cass sat up front. She spoke to him in Japanese. He was silent. She tried a little broken English. He spoke back, fast, in English. I started to translate.

"She understands me," Cass interrupted. "And I understand a lot more Japanese than you realize." Asako said nothing.

Inside the restaurant we sat down and ordered. And then Cass did something that bothered me, that I could tell bothered Asako, that I had been afraid Cass would do.

He ordered a Scotch and soda. A double.

I couldn't tell if Cass understood the words Asako spoke, but her tone was unmistakable. It appeared to be a lecture Cass had weathered before. He turned to me and said, "She's telling me I drink too much."

Actually, she was telling him that he was killing himself.

After breakfast we swung by the restaurateur's market, a warehouse with row upon row of freshly picked eggplants, bell peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, green onions and other produce arranged on tables. With me in town, Asako had given Cass leave from restaurant duties. We dropped her off at *Kiyasu* and cruised.

The day was warm and bright. We cranked down the windows and breezed through Tsu. Along the way, we hit a tackle shop to get information. Cass wasn't much of a fisherman, but he put up with my need to get a fix—

*(continues on next page)*



—up to the point to where I got into a conversation with the clerk, a girl in her 20's, the shop owner's daughter, that didn't have much to do with fishing. "Jesus, man. You're married," Cass huffed before he sulked off to have a cigarette and wait outside.

By the time we had the fishing scene scoped out the sun was high in a blue sky. It was time to put the morning's indiscretions behind us.

There was a plastic cooler on the back seat of his tan Corolla. We stopped at a 7-11, grabbed some snacks and filled the box with assorted cans of beer. It was like being in a time warp—back to when we were teenagers in the small Appalachian towns we grew up in.

"What about cops?" I asked as Cass opened a can and eased the sedan onto the thoroughfare. Japan has brutal drunk driving laws.

"Everyone's got too much sense to drink and drive around here. Cops don't even look for it."

The logic made sense. My head was swimming pleasantly as I popped open a second 17-ouncer. Cass shoved in a Sinatra tape. We coasted through Tsu drinking beers, singing along with Frank, the warm wind in our hair, on our faces, hittin' the low notes, doin' our best up high, happy.

By our third beer, we were into it, Mild Sevens hanging from our lips, windows cranked open, cold cans in our fists. Songs like *Luck be a Lady* and *Summer Wind* never sounded so good. When the big trombones came in on *I've Got You Under My Skin*, we changed the lyrics from "Run for cover! Run and hide!" to "Run, you mothers! Run from Swide!" Man, we were clever.

Later that afternoon we went back to Cass's house.

"Is it OK if I show you something" he said. "I need to show you something. And you don't know anything about it, so for once just shut up and don't talk. I wanna do all the talking. So that's the rule. You just watch. And if I feel like talking, I'm gonna talk."

I had no idea what he was getting at. We were down to the last of our beer. I took a pull from a can only slightly cooler than the palm of my hand, winced a little and said, "All right."

Cass walked across the tatami mats to a closet, reached up to a shelf and lifted down a rectangular wooden chest which he lugged back to the tea table where we were sitting. He flipped up a pair of metal latches on the box and one by one laid out the contents. An Iron Cross. A knife stamped with a German insignia. Other military paraphernalia, some German, some American. The last item to come out was a WWII United States Army corporal's uniform.

"My dad died," Cass began. "My mother sent me this stuff. I don't know what to do with it." His voice started to break.

"He got this stuff somewhere around . . ." Cass named a place I'd never heard of.

"God damnit. I didn't even know him. I didn't know him. He was a hero. Look at this." Tears were streaming down Cass's face now. "He did this. I grew up in the same house. He raised me. God damn. But he was . . . I never knew him. Look at this. What am I supposed to do with it? My mother sent it to me when he died. God damn it."

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*Sun-Defined Lines* by Steve Schoonmaker

I had never seen Cass cry. He was crying hard now. He had told me I wasn't to speak. I had no thought of speaking. I looked at the tears on my friend's face, at the uniform, at the trappings of war. I imagined a scene from *Antigone*. I saw Cass's father, reduced by war, picking trinkets off the bodies of fallen enemies. I saw him poking at corpses with the toe of his boot. I saw him bending down to take things he found interesting or valuable. I felt certain Cass had endured similar visions.

So I said nothing. After a while, Cass repacked the chest. "I guess I have to keep this stuff now," he said. He lugged the chest back to the closet, hoisted it up onto the shelf and closed the door. We didn't talk about it again.

That evening I bought a package of hooks, a float with a light powered by two tiny batteries, and a small cardboard box that held a few marine worms tucked into damp seaweed. I had brought other gear with me.

Out on the seawall there must've been 30 fishermen, thirty *denki-uki* like the one I'd just purchased twinkling on the surface of the gently rolling sea under a sliver of moon, the air salt-scented.

Regulars talked and joked quietly, smoked cigarettes, shared beers. Four or five got lucky. I was one. In fact, I was the first to put a fish on the wall, which created a stir as some of the men came over for a look and to express their *Omedetous*. In the end, it turned out that my catch was the smallest. But I'd broken the ice. For a few hours under the shirtsleeve-warm, starlit July sky, I allowed myself to imagine what it might be like to set up a little English school in Tsu, to move down there, to fish with these guys.

I'd have tossed back the small Sea Bass, but Asako had been a wonderful hostess and had asked me to keep anything decent I might catch. The three-pounder went into the cooler.

While Cass wandered around the seawall, I continued to fish, gradually retreating into my own world as I became lost in the rhythms of fishing.

I rebaited and made another cast, watched my lighted float drift in the current, lit a cigarette and looked up at the starlit night. Suddenly remembering my friend, I scanned the wall. He was on his back, sprawled on the concrete, a pack of cigarettes in his shirt pocket, his belly slowly rising and falling. A beer can stood near his cupped right hand. He looked peaceful.

Around midnight I woke him up. "I got a fish. Let's go to your restaurant and have it with Asako." He was beat, and he didn't much like fish.

"I'll drop you off," he replied.

It was quiet in *Kiyasu*, the name a Japanese play on Cass's name meaning *Come In*. I filleted the Sea Bass and arranged pieces of the fish in a pan where I'd heated some cooking oil while Asako set places for us with side dishes of *sunomono*, miso soup, and, for me, a mug of Kirin.

At 1:00 in the morning, after a day of running and a night of fishing, I sat in *Kiyasu* and shared fried *Suzuki* with Cass's wife. We smoked a little and talked about fishing, about Cass, about my wife and daughter. We talked about how Cass would eventually adjust to life in Tsu. We talked about the next time we'd all get together.

The following morning, Cass gave me a ride to the train station.

\* \* \*

## ***Part II: Tamagawa Tango***

Trains had stopped running for the night and the rain was coming down harder. Steve led us under a bridge on the Tamagawa near Denenchofu, an upscale Tokyo suburb. A pair of weathered wooden chairs looked out over the river. Most of the city had gone to bed and the night was now as nearly black as a city as big as Tokyo ever gets.

We each took a chair in a hazy world where ambient city light precluded total darkness, where rain clouds covered the heavens, where the temperature was neither warm nor cool. A mosquito whined in the heavy air around my head.

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His wife had told him he wasn't to go out drinking. When we returned on the last train to sleep at his apartment, we found the door locked and bolted.

There was a lot I wanted to say to Steve. "What am I doing?" he'd ask, already knowing the answer. And now we were sitting underneath a bridge in Tokyo, listening to rain, maybe thousands of miles from anyplace either of us wanted to be.

"I'm glad you came up," Steve said. He had turned to look at me, too far apart to shake hands. We'd each bought a final can of beer from a vending machine on our way to the bridge. He lifted his from where it was resting on his thigh, took a swig, set it back on his leg.

For a long time I didn't say anything. I knew he was in trouble. He knew I knew.

"It's been good to see you," he added.

I looked out on the black, flat, rain-smacked Tama and thought about its course, about how it started in the mountains and even had a few trout up there, how it ended in Tokyo Bay where there were Sea Bass, porgy, flounder. The water in front

of us held mostly carp and a few Largemouth Bass.

I wished Steve and I were fishing. I wished we were on some river in Alaska and that our wives were out of the range of our consideration and we were free to fish or not fish and to maybe sit around a fire and drink and talk. I wished we were doing anything but this.

The rain began to let up.

"Thanks for having me up," I replied. I looked out on the inky Tama one more time, thought I saw a gentle, languid, liquidy fold crease the surface, remembered an article I'd read about *Suzuki* occasionally being caught under this bridge. I closed my eyes and captured the swirl in the black place behind my eyelids.

"Let's get some sleep."

Some time later I woke from a dream scented with hibiscus and chicken grilling on charcoal braziers, shifted, tried to get comfortable in the hard chair. I looked over at Steve. He was sitting bolt upright, eyes wide, staring at the river.

\* \* \*



Photograph by Chris Byrnes





Photograph by Brian Varner